

Modesty of women according to Hinduism

Modesty : behavior, manner, or appearance intended to avoid impropriety or indecency.

Veil: a piece of cloth usually worn over the head and shoulders to cover the body.

Hindu scriptures too advise the woman to lower her gaze and to wear a veil for the purpose of protecting her modesty.

i. It is mentioned in the **Rigveda** Book 8 Hymn 33 Verse 19

"Since Brahma has become a dame, cast down thine eyes and look not up. More closely set thy feet. Let none see what the garment veils." (**Rigveda 8:33:19**)

{1}

इंद्र ने कहा- "हे प्रायोगि! तुम नीचे देखो, ऊपर मत देखो तुम पैरों को आपस में मिलाओ तुम्हारे होंठों एवं कमर को कोई न देखे तुम स्तोता होते हुए भी स्त्री हो।" (**Rigveda 8:33:19**)

{A}

We find in the above-mentioned text some beautiful instructions for a woman:
(a) a woman should lower her gaze. (b) she should put short steps while she walks to avoid exposure of adornments in her feet.

So the Rig Veda says that the woman should wear the veil.
They should lower their gaze and should not stare.

{Dame: title of a woman awarded a knightwood, equivalent to sir}

{Thine & Thy: yours}

ii. Wearing garments of the opposite sex is similarly forbidden by Hindu scriptures.

It is mentioned in **Rigveda** Book 10 Hymn 85 Verse 30:

"Unlovely is his body when it glistens with this wicked fiend, what time the husband wraps about his limbs the garment of his wife." (**Rigveda Book 10:85:30**)

{2}

पति यदि वधू के वस्त्र से अपना शरीर ढकना चाहता है तो पति का तेजस्वी शरीर पापधारिणी कृत्या के कारण श्रीहीन हो जाता है. (Rigveda Book 10:85:30)

{B}

So the Rig Veda says that wearing the clothes of the opposite sex is prohibited {fiend: evil spirit or demon}

(iii) According to Bhavabhuti in his **Mahavira Charitro** Act II:

"When Rama sees Parasurama coming towards him, he directs his wife Sita, "Dear one, he is our elder, therefore turn aside and veil yourself".

(Mahavir Charitro Act 2)

(iv) **Bhagavad Gita** Chapter 16 Verses 2-3:

"Modesty ...belong to godly men endowed with divine nature".

(Bhagavad Gita 16:2-3)

(v) There are various historical records of Indian women wearing a veil in past centuries. In the book "Art in Gupta and post Gupta coinage", one of the coins shows a lady having a veil on her head, which hangs down to the shoulders and upper arms.

(vi) Even today, in various villages of India, Hindu women wear a veil covering the head and some even cover their face.

Reference of books

RIGVEDA English:

{1}: Book 8, Hymn XXXIII, Verse 19, PDF Page no. 491

{2}: Book 10, Hymn LXXXV, Verse 30, PDF Page no. 682

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7XTHm0aGxRuUW9faS1taWZad2c/view?usp=sharing>

RIGVEDA Hindi:

{A}: Book 8, Hymn XXXIII, Verse 19, PDF Page no. 1267

{B}: Book 10, Hymn LXXXV, Verse 30, PDF Page no. 1710

<https://archive.org/details/rigveda-hindi-dr-ganga-sahay-sharma>

MAHAVIRA CHARITRO English:

ACT 2 PDF Page no. 41

<https://archive.org/details/dli.ministry.16643>

BHAGAVAD-GITA English:

CH 16, Verse 2 & 3, PDF Page no.338 & 339

<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.237563>